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**Del Norte County, California
Child and Family Services Review**

**System Improvement Plan
September 28, 2004**

I. RECURRENCE OF MALTREATMENT

Indicators/Measures

These measures reflect the percent of children who were victims of child abuse and/or neglect with a subsequent substantiated report of abuse and/or neglect within specified time periods.

A. Recurrence of Maltreatment (Federal Indicator 1A)

Of all children with a substantiated allegation within the first six months of the 12-month study period, what percent had another substantiated allegation within six months?

12-Month Study Period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/03 to 12/31/03	22%	11.1%
10/01/02 to 09/30/03	24.2%	11.3%
07/01/02 to 06/30/03	20.0%	11.2%

B. Recurrence of maltreatment (State Indicator 1B)

a. Of all children with a substantiated referral during the 12-month study period, what percent had a subsequent substantiated referral within 12 months?

12-month study period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/03 to 12/31/03	32.2%	14.9%
10/01/02 to 09/30/03	32.8%	14.8%
07/01/02 to 06/30/03	33.7%	14.6%

- b. Of all children with a *first* substantiated referral during the 12-month study period, what percent had a subsequent substantiated referral within 12 months? (State Indicator 1B)

12-month study period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/03 to 12/31/03	24.7%	13.1%
10/01/02 to 09/30/03	28.2%	13.1%
07/01/02 to 06/30/03	31.9%	12.9%

II. Improvement Goals

- A. Increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by a 20% improvement in Federal Indicator 1A: Percent recurrence of maltreatment
- B. Increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by a 20% improvement in State Indicator 1B: Percent recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months
- C. Increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by a 20% improvement in State Indicator 1B: Percent recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months after first substantiated allegation

III. Strategies

- A. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases
- B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)
- C. Increase the Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity
- D. Implement a differential response Child Welfare Services Intake structure using Small County Initiative grant funds to contract with a community-based organization

IV. Milestones

- A. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

Milestone	Date
Use Structured Decisions Making tools.	October 1, 2004
Adjust the of the Structured Decision Making tools based on data reports and on-site technical assistance provided by the Children's Research Center.	Once every three months in fiscal year 2004 - 2005

- B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Milestone	Date
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Project Year 2 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	October 1, 2004
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Year 3 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	November 1, 2004

- C. Increase the Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity

Milestone	Date
Hire, train, and assign a masters level social worker to a Family Maintenance services caseload.	November 1, 2004
Hire, train, and assign a masters level social worker to an Emergency Response services caseload.	December 1, 2004

- D. Implement a differential response Child Welfare Services Intake structure using Small County Initiative grant funds to contract with a community-based organization

Milestone	Date
Contract with a community-based organization to provide differential response Community Response Path services.	Thirty days after receiving Small County Initiative funding
Review differential response Community Response Path Services for effectiveness.	Six months after the service begins

V. Description of how the strategies will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area

These strategies will increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by a reduction in the percent of children who were victims of child abuse and/or neglect with a subsequent substantiated report of abuse and/or neglect within specified time periods because:

- A. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

Structured Decision Making is nationally recognized evidence based practice currently under review by the Child Welfare System Improvement/Cohort 1 and being implemented in approximately 25% of California's counties, including Del Norte. It provides for:

- Highly structured assessments of family risk and family needs, as called for in California's Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan,
- A system of case review and reassessment as required by California Department of Social Services Child Welfare Services regulations, and
- A comprehensive information system that provides data for program monitoring, planning, and evaluation.

B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Linkages is a promising practice being implemented in 13 California counties, including Del Norte. It recognizes poverty as the most significant risk factor for child abuse and neglect and supports the coordinated assessment, case planning, and service delivery in Child Welfare Services and CalWORKs.

C. Increase the Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity

Emergency Response and Family Maintenance services are evidence-informed activities designed to assess child safety and provide in-home protective services to prevent or remedy abuse and neglect. Voluntary Family Maintenance emphasizes engaging families in the change process rather than substantiating allegations.

D. Implement a differential response Child Welfare Services Intake structure using Small County Initiative grant funds to contract with a community-based organization

Differential Response is an emerging strategy that insures a larger proportion of referrals will receive change oriented services.

VI. Description of the systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goals

A. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

Counties that are certified to full utilization of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) should be approved to use their Child Welfare Services allocation funding to contract with the Children's Research Center for the Structured Decision Making System web-based tools, reports, and technical assistance.

B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Fiscal incentives should be offered to counties that have coordinated Child Welfare Services and CalWORKs activities (including joint assessments and unified case plans) to standards set by the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project at the California Center for Research on Women and Families.

- C. Increase the Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity
 - 1. The workload study (SB2030) done in 1999-2000 recommendations should be fully implemented with State, Federal and foundation assistance. In addition, once the fiscal institute is implemented and made available to county staff it will be utilized to learn the latest in strategies to increase financial resources.
 - 2. Workforce issues within Child Welfare Services continue to be challenging in both recruitment and retention of skilled employees. Del Norte County will work with Merit Systems Services examining promising practices and enhanced strategies for the recruitment and retention of social workers.
 - 3. The Preplacement Preventive Services (SOC158) data collection form should be modified to distinguish referrals that are disposed to voluntary and court ordered Family Maintenance services. The CWS funding allocation methodology should be changed to weight voluntary cases more heavily than court ordered cases.
- D. Implement a differential response Child Welfare Services Intake structure using Small County Initiative grant funds to contract with a community-based organization

Funding should be delivered to counties that won Small County Initiative grant funding to implement differential response.

VII. Description of the educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals

- A. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

On site technical assistance will be provided by the Children's Research Center.
- B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Technical assistance will be provided by the Center for Research on Children and Families.
- C. Increase the Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity

Training will be provided by the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at the University of California at Davis.

- D. Implement a differential response Child Welfare Services Intake structure using Small County Initiative grant funds to contract with a community-based organization.

Training will be provided to Child Welfare Services Redesign Cohort II counties, including Del Norte, by agencies contracting with the California Department of Social Services, e.g., The Breakthrough Series Collaborative, a special project of the East Bay Community Foundation.

VIII. The roles of other partners in achieving the improvement goals

- A. With Small County Initiative grant funding, the Del Norte Child Care Council will administer the Community Response path in differential response.
- B. A variety of agencies will continue to participate in the Child Welfare Work Group, an advisory group for the System Improvement Plan.

IX. Any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None identified at this time.

X. RECURRENCE OF ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT IN HOMES WHERE CHILDREN WERE NOT REMOVED

Indicator/Measure

- A. This measure reflects the occurrence of abuse and/or neglect of children who remain in their own homes.
- B. Recurrence of Abuse and/or Neglect in Homes Where Children Were Not Removed (State Indicator 2A)

Of all the children with an allegation (inconclusive or substantiated) during the 12-month study period who were not removed, what percent had a subsequent substantiated allegation within 12 months?

12-Month Study Period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/02 to 12/31/02	25.5%	9.5%
10/01/01 to 09/30/02	25.0%	9.5%
07/01/01 to 06/30/02	25.2%	9.5%

XI. Improvement Goal

Increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by a 20% improvement in State Indicator 2A: Percent rate of recurrence of abuse and/or neglect in homes where children were not removed

XII. Strategies

- A. Expand Wraparound Services caseload capacity
- B. Implement service delivery through a faith based agency
- C. Implement an improved case closing protocol
- D. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases
- E. Increase Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity

- F. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

XIII. Milestones

- A. Expand Wraparound Services

Milestone	Date
Increase Wraparound Services caseload capacity by fully staffing the program.	January 1, 2005

- B. Implement service delivery through a faith based agency

Milestone	Date
Create a memorandum of understanding with the Community Assistance Network, a faith based agency, to provide Family Maintenance service activities to selected families.	January 1, 2005

- C. Implement an improved case closing protocol

Milestone	Date
Implement an improved case closing protocol (see V,D below).	January 1, 2005

- D. Apply Structured Decision Making (SDM) risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

Milestone	Date
Use Structured Decisions Making tools.	October 1, 2004
Adjust the of the Structured Decision Making tools based on data reports and on-site technical assistance provided by the Children's Research Center.	Once every three months in fiscal year 2004 - 2005

- E. Increase Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity

Milestone	Date
Hire, train, and assign a masters level social worker to a Family Maintenance services caseload.	November 1, 2004
Hire, train, and assign a masters level social worker to an Emergency Response services caseload.	December 1, 2004

- E. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Milestone	Date
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Project Year 2 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	October 1, 2004
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Year 3 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	November 1, 2004

XIV. Description of how the strategies will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area

These strategies will increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by a reduction in the percent rate of abuse and/or neglect of children who remain in their own homes within a specified period of time because:

- A. Expand Wraparound Services caseload capacity

Wraparound is a service delivery method with values (e.g., collaborative, strengths based, family-centered) that are consistent with three of the key Child Welfare Services Redesign objectives:

1. Partnering to prevent child abuse and neglect
 2. Acting early to preserve and strengthen families
 3. Broadening efforts to restore family capacity
- B. Implement service delivery through a faith based agency

Family Maintenance services, including teaching and demonstrating homemakers and counseling, are evidence-informed activities. Delivering some of these services through a faith based agency is consistent with the federal faith based initiative which is grounded in the belief that these agencies can impact lives beyond the spiritual and they should participate in the delivery of federally funded social services.

- C. Implement an improved case closing protocol

A Family Maintenance case may be closed when the case plan objectives are achieved and the child is no longer endangered. However, these closing criteria do not address the potential for re-abuse or neglect. So, we are going to conduct a small-scale test designed to reduce the potential for re-abuse and/or neglect:

When a staff person requests approval to close a case, (s)he will make a brief entry in the Closure Statement narrative box of the End Case dialog box in CWS/CMS. It will include:

1. The conditions – including services and supports – that are in place to increase the likelihood that positive changes the family has made will persist, and
 2. The circumstances that are most likely to result in a subsequent substantiated allegation of abuse and/or neglect.
- D. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

Structured Decision Making is nationally recognized evidence based practice currently under review by the Child Welfare System Improvement/Cohort 1 and being implemented in approximately 25% of California's counties, including Del Norte. It provides for:

- Highly structured assessments of family risk and family needs, as called for in California's Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan,

- A system of case review and reassessment to supplement, as required by California Department of Social Services Child Welfare Services regulations, and
 - A comprehensive information system that provides data for program monitoring, planning, and evaluation
- E. Increase Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance caseload capacity

Emergency Response and Family Maintenance services are evidence-informed activities designed to assess child safety and provide in-home protective services to prevent or remedy abuse and neglect. Voluntary Family Maintenance emphasizes engaging families in the change process rather than substantiating allegations.

XV. Description of the systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goals

- A. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases
- Counties that are certified to full utilization of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) should be approved to use their Child Welfare Services allocation funding to contract with the Children's Research Center for the Structured Decision Making System web-based tools, reports, and technical assistance.
- B. Increase Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance Caseload capacity
1. The Preplacement Preventive Services (SOC 158) data collection form should be modified to distinguish referrals that are disposed to voluntary and court ordered Family Maintenance services. The CWS funding allocation methodology should be changed to weight voluntary cases more heavily than court ordered cases.
 2. AB2030 study recommendation should be fully implemented with State, Federal and foundation assistance. In addition, once the fiscal institute is implemented and made available to county staff it will be utilized to learn the latest in strategies to increase financial resources.
 3. Workforce issues within child welfare continue to be challenging in

both recruitment and retention of skilled employees. DHSS will work with Merit Systems Services examining promising practices and enhanced strategies for the recruitment and retention of social workers.

XVI. Description of the educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals

A. Expand Wraparound Services caseload capacity

Training will be provided by the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at the University of California at Davis.

B. Implement service delivery through a faith based agency

Training will be provided by the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at the University of California at Davis.

C. Implement an improved case closing protocol

Training will be provided by Child Welfare Services supervisors.

D. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

On site technical assistance will be provided by the Children's Research Center.

E. Increase Emergency Response and voluntary Family Maintenance Services caseload capacity

Training will be provided by the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at the University of California at Davis.

XVII. The roles of other partners in achieving the improvement goals

A. Wraparound Services are coordinated by the Del Norte County Probation Department.

B. Faith based services will be provided by the Community Assistance Network (CAN)

C. A variety of agencies will continue to participate in the Child Welfare Work Group, an advisory group for the System Improvement Plan.

XVIII. Any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of the improvement goals.

No changes are needed.

XIX. TIMELY SOCIAL WORKER VISITS WITH CHILD

Indicator/Measure

- A. This is a process measure designed to determine if social workers are seeing children on a monthly basis when that is required.
- B. Percent of timely social worker visits with child (State Indicator 2C)

Of all children who required a monthly social worker visit, how many receive a monthly visit?

Month	Del Norte County	California
04/03	80.2%	84.6%
05/03	80.8%	85.2%
06/03	82.7%	85.8%
07/03	81.4%	85.4%
08/03	81.2%	85.9%
09/03	83%	86.4%
10/03	86.8% **	85.7%
11/03	84.6%	86.3%
12/03	87.4% **	86.8%

** Del Norte County meets state expectations

XX. Improvement Goal

Increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by at least a 91% compliance rate on State Indicator 2C: Percent of timely social worker visits with child

XXI. Strategies

- A. Use SafeMeasures to monitor monthly contacts
- B. Use child-specific out-of-county supervision agreements (per California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures, Section 31-505.123).
- C. Implement visit (contact) documentation standards that reflect the purposes of visitation (as found in California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures, Section 31-320.1).

XXII. Milestones

- A. Use SafeMeasures to monitor monthly contacts

Milestone	Date
Supervisors use the SafeMeasures application to monitor monthly contacts by the staff persons in the unit they supervise.	November 1, 2004

- B. Use child-specific out-of-county supervision agreements

Milestone	Date
Have a child-specific out-of-county supervision agreement available as a template (document) in the CWS/CMS application.	November 1, 2004
Have a signed supervision agreement for each child in an out-of-county placement.	December 1, 2004

- C. Implement visit (contact) documentation standards that reflect the purpose of visitation (as found in California Department of Social Services manual of Policies and Procedures, Section 3131-320.1.

Milestone	Date
Develop contact documentation standards.	November 1, 2004
Implement contact documentation standards.	December 1, 2004

XXIII. Description of how the strategies will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area

These strategies will increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as measured by a 91% compliance rate on timely social worker visits with child because:

A. Use SafeMeasures to monitor monthly contacts

Staff performance usually improves when clear expectations are monitored and followed by feedback. SafeMeasures is a web-based application that enables unit supervisors to easily monitor in person contact compliance.

B. Use child-specific out-of-county supervision agreements

Child-specific out-of-county supervision agreements insure that children placed out-of-county are seen monthly by staff persons in the county in which they are placed.

C. Implement visit (contact) documentation standards that reflect the purposed of visitation

Standards insure that the audit requirements are met, e.g., timely documentation of an in-person contact with the child by a social worker. They also increase the likelihood that the visit/contact promotes the child's safety, stability, and well-being.

XXIV. Description of the systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goals

A. Use SafeMeasures to monitor monthly contacts

Counties that are certified to full utilization of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) should be approved to use their Child Welfare Services allocation funding to contract with the Children's Research Center for SafeMeasures web-based tools, reports, and technical assistance.

B. Use child-specific out-of-county supervision agreements

There should be a way to enter the existence of a courtesy supervision agreement in CWS/CMS.

XXV. Description of the educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals

A. Use SafeMeasure to monitor monthly contacts

On site technical assistance will be provided by the Children's Research Center.

B. Use child-specific out-of-county supervision agreements

Child Welfare Services supervisors will provide training.

- C. Implement visit (contact) documentation standards that reflect the purpose of visitation

Child Welfare Services supervisors will provide training.

XXVI. The roles of other partners in achieving the improvement goals

- A. Documentation standards will be developed in consultation with the Probation Department, which also follows Manual of Policies and Procedures, Division 31 standards for contacts.
- B. A variety of agencies will continue to participate in the Child Welfare Work Group, an advisory group for the System Improvement Plan.

XXVII. Any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None needed.

XXVIII. LENGTH OF TIME TO EXIT FOSTER CARE TO REUNIFICATION

Indicators/Measures

- A. These measures are designed to reflect the number of foster care placements for each child, the length of time in foster care, and the rate that children re-enter foster care after they have returned home or other permanent arrangements have been made.

- B. Percent reunified within 12 months – entry cohort (State Indicator 3A)

For all children who entered foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12-month study period, what percent were reunified within 12 months?

12 Month Study Period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/02 to 12/31/02	16.7%	35.2%
10/01/01 to 09/30/02	27.8%	35.0%
07/01/01 to 06/30/02	31.7%	34.6%

- C. Percent reunified within 12 months (Federal Indicator 3E)

Of all children who were reunified from child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent had been in care for less than 12 months?

12 Month Study Period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/03 to 12/31/03	82.6% **	64.9%
10/01/02 to 09/30/03	85.3% **	65.1%
07/01/02 to 06/30/03	81.8% **	65.3%

** Del Norte County meets state expectations

XXIX. Improvement Goal

Reduce the number of foster care placements for each child, the length of time each child is in foster care, and the rate of children that re-enter foster care after

they have been returned home or other permanent care arrangements have been made as measured by performance equal to or better than the statewide average.

XXX. Strategies

- A. Apply the "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making tool to all Family Reunification cases.
- B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)
- C. In each case in which the case plan goal is Family Reunification:
 - 1. Include a permanency alternate goal and case management activities to support that goal (as required by California Department of Social Services Manual of Policies and Procedures section 31-201.12) and
 - 2. Document discussion of the permanency alternate goal at each monthly contact with parents.
- D. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment.

XXXI. Milestones

- A. Apply the "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool to all Family Reunification cases.

Milestone	Date
Use the "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool to reassess Family Reunification cases at the time of the juvenile Status Review Hearing.	November 1, 2004

- B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages).

Milestone	Date
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Project Year 2 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	October 1, 2004
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Year 3 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	November 1, 2004

- C. Include a permanency alternate goal and activities to support that goal.

Milestone	Date
Include a permanency alternate goal (concurrent services track) in each initial and updated Family Reunification case plan	November 1, 2004
Document discussion of the permanency alternate goal, i.e., what will happen should Family Reunification efforts fail at each monthly contact with parents.	December 1, 2004

- D. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment

Milestone	Date
Revise referral protocol.	December 1, 2004
Implement revised referral protocol.	January 1, 2005

XXXII. Description of how the strategies will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area

These strategies will reduce the number of foster care placements for each child, the length of time in foster care, and the rate that children re-enter foster care

after they have returned home or other permanent arrangements have been made because:

- A. Apply Structured Decision Making risk, safety, and needs assessment practices to all referrals and cases

Structured Decision Making is an evidence-based practice being implemented in approximately 25% of California's counties, including Del Norte. It provides for:

- Highly structured assessments of family risk and family needs, as called for in California's Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan,
- A system of case review and reassessment to supplement, as required by California Department of Social Services Child Welfare Services regulations, and
- A comprehensive information system that provides data for program monitoring, planning, and evaluation

- B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Linkages is a promising practice being implemented in 13 California counties, including Del Norte. It recognizes that poverty is a significant risk factor for child abuse and neglect and supports the coordinated assessment, case planning, and service delivery in Child Welfare Services and CalWORKs.

- C. Include a permanency alternate goal and activities to support that goal

Concurrent planning (as opposed to sequential planning) is a promising case management practice for reducing foster care drift. It is consistent with the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 in that it recognizes that outcomes are determined by the department approach as much as by the parental situation.

- D. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment

Informing other agencies that clients desire or require their services and assisting the clients to avail themselves of such services is a basic case management activity. Well made referrals, including referrals for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment services, correlate with successful outcomes.

XXXIII. Description of the systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goals

A. Structured Decision Making (SDM)

Counties that are certified to full utilization of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) should be approved to use their Child Welfare Services allocation funding to contract with the Children's Research Center for Structured Decision Making web-based tools, reports, and technical assistance.

B. CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

1. Fiscal incentives should be offered to counties that have coordinated Child Welfare Services and CalWORKs activities (including joint assessments and unified case plans) to standards set by the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project at the California Center for Research on Women and Families.
2. The Preplacement Preventive Services (SOC 158) data collection form should be modified to distinguish referrals that are disposed to voluntary and court ordered Family Maintenance services. The CWS funding allocation methodology should be changed to weight voluntary cases more heavily than court ordered cases.
3. Workforce issues within child welfare continue to be challenging in both recruitment and retention of skilled employees. DHSS will work with Merit Systems Services examining promising practices and enhanced strategies for the recruitment and retention of social workers.

XXXIV. Description of the educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals

A. Apply the "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making tool to all Family Reunification cases.

On site technical assistance will be provided by the Children's Research Center.

B. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Technical assistance will be provided by the Center for Research on Children and Families.

C. Include a permanency alternate goal and activities to support that goal.

Child Welfare Services supervisors will provide training.

- D. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment

Child Welfare Services supervisors will provide training.

XXXV. The roles of other partners in achieving the improvement goals

- A. The Probation Department will participate in the CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages).
- B. Mental Health Services and Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services will coauthor the referral protocol for drug and alcohol treatment.
- C. A variety of agencies will continue to participate in the Child Welfare Work Group, an advisory group for the System Improvement Plan.

XXXVI. Any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None identified at this time.

XXXVII. RATE OF FOSTER CARE RE-ENTRY

Indicators/Measures

These measures reflect the number of children who re-enter foster care subsequent to reunification or guardianship.

A. Percent of admissions who were re-entries (Federal Indicator 3F)

For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent were subsequent entries within 12 months of a prior exit?

12 Month Study Period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/02 to 12/31/02	6.6% **	10.7%
10/01/01 to 09/30/02	2.1% **	10.9%
07/01/01 to 06/30/02	2.4% **	10.8%

** Del Norte County meets state expectations

B. Percent who re-entered within 12 months of reunification [entry cohort] reunified within 12 months? (State Indicator 3G)

For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care for the first time (and stayed at least five days) during the 12 month study period and were reunified within 12 months of entry, what percent re-entered foster care within 12 months of reunification?

12 Month Study Period	Del Norte County	California
01/01/03 to 12/31/03	45.0%	13.3%
10/01/02 to 09/30/03	36.0%	13.0%
07/01/02 to 06/30/03	40.0%	13.4%

XXXVIII. Improvement Goal

Reduce the number of children who re-enter foster care subsequent to reunification or guardianship by 20%.

XXXIX. Strategies

- A. Apply the "Family Strengths and Needs Assessment" and "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making tools to all Family Reunification cases.
- B. Implement best practices for parent-child visitation
- C. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)
- D. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment
- E. Expand Wraparound Services caseload capacity

XL. Milestones

- A. Apply the "Family Strengths and Needs Assessment" and "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools to all Family Reunification cases.

Milestone	Date
Use the "Family Strengths and Needs Assessment" Structured Decision Making tool for the creation of initial and updated case plans.	November 1, 2004
Use the "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making tool to reassess Family Reunification cases at the time of the juvenile Status Review Hearing.	November 1, 2004

- B. Implement best practices for parent-child visitation

Milestone	Date
Review best practices for parent-child visitation.	January 1, 2005
Implement selected best practices.	March 1, 2005

C. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Milestone	Date
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Project Year 2 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	October 1, 2004
Implement Linkages according to the Linkages Year 3 plan submitted to the Center for Research on Women and Families.	November 1, 2004

D. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment

Milestone	Date
Revise the referral protocols.	December 1, 2004
Implement the revised referral protocols.	January 1, 2005

E. Expand Wraparound Services

Milestone	Date
Increase Wraparound Services caseload capacity by fully staffing the program.	January 1, 2005

XLI. Description of how the strategies will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area

These strategies will reduce the number of children who re-enter foster care subsequent to reunification or guardianship by 20% because:

- A. Apply the "Family Strengths and Needs Assessment" and "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making tools to all Family Reunification cases.

Structured Decision Making is an evidence-based practice being implemented in approximately 25% of California's counties, including Del Norte. It provides for:

- Highly structured assessments of family risk and family needs, as called for in California's Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan,
- A system of case review and reassessment to supplement, as required by California Department of Social Services Child Welfare Services regulations, and
- A comprehensive information system that provides data for program monitoring, planning, and evaluation

B. Implement best practices for parent-child visitation

Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 362.1 calls for parent-child visitation to be "as frequent as possible, consistent with the well-being of the child". This is in line with research showing frequent high quality visitation correlates with successful reunification (see Enhancing Visiting Services: Standards, leadership, Organization, and Collaboration by Peg Hess [Philadelphia: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare])

C. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Linkages is a promising practice being implemented in 13 California counties, including Del Norte. It recognizes that poverty is a significant risk factor for child abuse and neglect and supports the coordinated assessment, case planning, and service delivery in Child Welfare Services and CalWORKs.

B. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment

Informing other agencies that clients desire or require their services and assisting the clients to avail themselves of such services is a basic case management activity. Well made referrals, including referrals for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment services, correlate with successful outcomes.

C. Expand Wraparound Services caseload capacity

Wraparound is a service delivery method with values (e.g., collaborative, strengths based, family-centered) that are consistent with three of the key Child Welfare Services Redesign objectives:

1. Partnering to prevent child abuse and neglect
2. Acting early to preserve and strengthen families
3. Broadening efforts to restore family capacity

XLII. Description of the systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goals

- A. Apply the "Family Strengths and Needs Assessment" and "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making tools to all Family Reunification cases.

Counties that are certified to full utilization of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) should be approved to use their Child Welfare Services allocation funding to contract with the Children's Research Center for Structured Decision Making web-based tools, reports, and technical assistance.

- B. CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)
1. Fiscal incentives should be offered to counties that have coordinated Child Welfare Services and CalWORKs activities (including joint assessments and unified case plans) to standards set by the CalWORKs/Child Welfare Partnership Project at the California Center for Research on Women and Families.
 2. The workload study (SB2030) done in 1999-2000 recommendations should be fully implemented with State, Federal and foundation assistance. In addition once the fiscal institution is implemented and made available to county staff it will be utilized to learn the latest in strategies to increase financial resources.
 3. Workforce issues within child welfare continue to be challenging in both recruitment and retention of skilled employees. DHSS will work with Merit Systems Services examining promising practices and enhanced strategies for the recruitment and retention of social workers.

XLIII. Description of the educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals

- A. Apply the "Family Strengths and Needs Assessment" and "Reunification Assessment for In-Custody Cases" Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools to all Family Reunification cases.

On site technical assistance will be provided by the Children's Research Center.

- B. Implement best practices for parent-child visitation

Training will be provided by the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at the University of California at Davis.

- C. Implement CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages)

Technical assistance will be provided by the Center for Research on Children and Families.

- D. Improve the protocol for referring clients for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment

Training will be provided by Child Welfare Services supervisors

- E. Expand Wraparound Services caseload capacity

Training will be provided by the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice at the University of California at Davis.

XLIV. The roles of other partners in achieving the improvement goals

- A. The Probation Department will participate in the CalWORKs – Child Welfare Services Partnership (Linkages).
- B. Mental Health Services and Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services will co-author the referral protocol for drug and alcohol treatment.
- C. A variety of agencies will continue to participate in the Child Welfare Work Group, an advisory group for the System Improvement Plan.

XLV. Any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None identified at this time.